Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Division of Fish and Wildlife
**Fall 2001**

# focus on Fish & Wildlife

# Allegheny woodrat — extraordinary packrat

*The Allegheny woodrat is nocturnal, making interactions with people rare. Woodrats pose no threat to human health or safety.*

Meet the original packrat — the Allegheny woodrat. The woodrat received its nickname from its habit of collecting and storing just about anything it encounters. Items found in woodrat treasure troves are varied, from bottle caps, coins and cartridges to snail shells, feathers and bones. No one is really sure why they do this.

Allegheny woodrats are found in rocky, wooded bluff areas. In Indiana, they are found along the cliffs of the Ohio River. Buds, leaves, stems, fruits, seeds, acorns and other nuts form the mainstay of their diet. Food is stored, especially in late summer and early fall in preparation for winter. It is common to find food and non-food items stashed together.

Although classified as a rat, the Allegheny woodrat looks like a large, white-footed mouse. Its fur is long, soft and brownish-gray or cinnamon with a white belly and feet. Its tail is also furred.

The woodrat is one of Indiana's endangered species. Found only in Harrison and Crawford counties, the Division of Fish & Wildlife's Endangered Wildlife Program is conducting surveys to ascertain the status of the woodrat. Biologists hope to find new woodrat locations and information on why woodrat numbers have declined.

No single factor can be blamed for the woodrat's dwindling numbers. Biologists believe that a decline in acorn production, parasitic raccoon roundworm infection, increased predation, changes in forest composition, severe winter weather and habitat fragmentation have all played a role.

Woodrat surveys are conducted on a yearly basis. Small boxtraps are placed in areas frequented by woodrats and in habitat that could support woodrat populations. When captured, the woodrats are weighed and measured and age is determined. Each woodrat is given an ear tag and a microchip so it can be identified if captured again. The woodrat is then released in the area of its capture.

Although the number of woodrats have declined at some individual sites, the overall Indiana population remains small but stable. Three new sites were found in Harrison County during the 1992-1993 survey season. Juveniles are caught each year, which is proof that reproduction is occurring. These findings, along with future management plans to be developed from survey data, create a sense of cautious optimism for the woodrat's future in the state. After all, life would be less interesting with no packrats around.

**Kathy Quimbach,** nongame biologist, Division of Fish and Wildlife

## Topics this issue...

***Catching steelhead in Indiana***

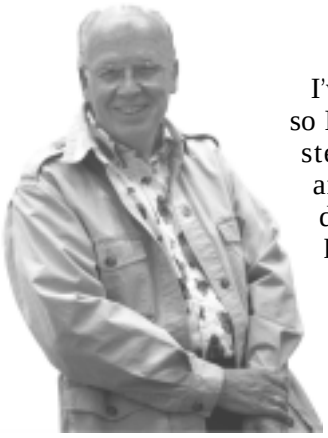
***Ginseng***

***Timber rattlesnakes***

***State record flier expedition***

# Director of *Fish & Wildlife*

## *When it's time, it's time.*



I've talked about retiring for a least a year now, so I guess it's time to set the date. On July 1, I stepped down as Director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife and assumed the position of director of special projects for the division. Director Macklin appointed Bill James as acting director. My position has been advertised nationally and a new director will be hired soon.

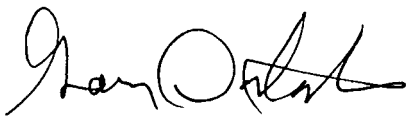
I've had many good jobs in my career, but being director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife has been most fulfilling and personally rewarding of anything I have ever done. I've been very fortunate to have good bosses that have given me a lot of room to run. But mostly I have been so privileged to be surrounded by the best natural resource staff that there is. One of our division goals has been to be recognized as leaders in the field of fish and wildlife management at the national level. Indeed, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recognized our professional fish and wildlife management capabilities when they met here in Indianapolis last September.

The future will be full of challenges with state and national economic concerns affecting everything we do. But there will also be significant opportunities coming along such as CARA. We will receive $850,000 for this year and a good possibility of twice that amount next year for wildlife programs.

This is just a year-by-year funding source that we cannot depend on, but will be a great help while we work on permanent funding.

As of the August Congressional break, this year's CARA (HR 701), has over 239 House members as co-sponsors. This funding source could provide over $29 million to DNR. The Indiana coalition has played a very important role in the progress that CARA has made. I encourage you all to join the coalition in supporting this historic piece of natural resource funding for the future.

I want to thank you all for your support of the division and for giving me the privilege of working with you in protecting and managing Indiana's valuable fish and wildlife resources. See you on the other side.



Gary Doxtater

## Mission

*To manage fish and wildlife for present and future generations, balancing ecological, recreational and economic benefits.*

INDIANA DIVISION OF FISH&WILDLIFE

*Focus on Fish & Wildlife* is a quarterly publication from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish and Wildlife. *Focus on Fish & Wildlife* seeks to educate sportsmen and women, conservationists, wildlife recreationists and all Hoosiers on topics related to the management of Indiana's fish and wildlife resources.

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focus on

# *Big fish on thin sticks*

## *Fly-fishing for steelhead in the Midwest*

Before engineers choked western U.S. rivers with concrete, migratory swarms of steelhead trout left the Pacific, entered the Columbia River, followed tributaries across Washington, skirted Idaho's desert plateau, and stopped in the foothills of the Rockies. They stopped to spawn at gravel beds in rivers of Montana, three states away from the ocean. From the same gravel beds, their smolts — the young steelhead — returned to the Pacific Ocean.

First-time flycasters are generally shell-shocked with awe at their first steelhead. It is as if somehow ocean tides, swollen rivers, and the strength of mountains have been squeezed into the shape of a fish. From the water fly-anglers can connect to the continent, even if only briefly, through a long thin stick.

While you could make a trip west, the truth is that North America's best fly-casting for steelhead now occurs in the Midwest, in those tributaries of the freshwater oceans of the Great Lakes. Steelheading in Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio is but a day trip away for Hoosier anglers.

Anglers making the leap from spin-fishing to fly-casting generally have two concerns: cost and the learning curve.

The good news is that most companies make entry level gear that is within reach of generally everyone and no more costly than a good spin-fishing outfit. My advice is to buy the best reel that you can afford and, if you're going to compromise, compromise on your first rod. Your first rod for salmon and steelhead ought to be a 9 foot, 8-weight rod. This rod will also serve as a good popper rod for bass.

Is fly-casting difficult to learn? No, it is not. But, the truth be told, I don't think I have ever run across anyone that managed to do a great or quick job of teaching themselves.

Find a fly-shop, a club, or a friend that will take an hour to show you the basics. If you need to, stop a fly-caster on the water and ask for a pointer. Fly-casting tends to attract the sort of people willing to show you what's working and how to get it into the water.

From the St. Joe to the Pere Marquette River, I'm never without certain flies. By far and away the number one fly for Midwest steelhead is an imitation of the green rock worm, a caddis nymph. Stone fly nymphs and leeches are indispensable additions to any fly box. Egg flies are a staple during fall and spring runs. During the summer run, streamers, particularly white followed by nymphs, consistently produce strikes.

Some things you will learn quickly. Others will take time — lots of time on the water. And, if you think about it, that doesn't sound so bad either.


Steelhead are one of several west coast imported trout and salmon species in the Great Lakes. Fabulous stream fishing opportunities occur when they return to their stocked (natal) stream for spawning. These "silver bullets" use Lake Michigan as their ocean and streams for producing their young. Most steelhead in Lake Michigan originate from hatchery stockings, but some natural reproduction does occur. The stream fishing calendar for steelhead varies seasonally, but they are often present in Hoosier streams ten months out of the year.


Clark McCreedy holds a steelhead trout caught using a fly rod. Indiana's steelhead program provides anglers with the best summer steelhead fishery in the Great Lakes. DNR's fishery biologists have made Indiana the number one source for summer run steelhead eggs, fry and fingerlings.

**Clark D. McCreedy,** wildlife biologist, Division of Fish and Wildlife.

focus on

# *The ginseng thing*

## *Things you'll need to know if you harvest, buy or sell ginseng*

### The anatomy of a ginseng plant

Ginseng grows throughout most of Indiana. From the central stem comes one or more leaf stalks. The three to five toothed leaves at the base of each stalk are actually leaflets. These leaflets and their stalk make up one leaf (or prong).

Ginseng does not reproduce until it's three or four years old. At that time it bears a round cluster of pale green flowers. The flowers produce a fruit-cluster that turns bright red when ripe in the middle of August.

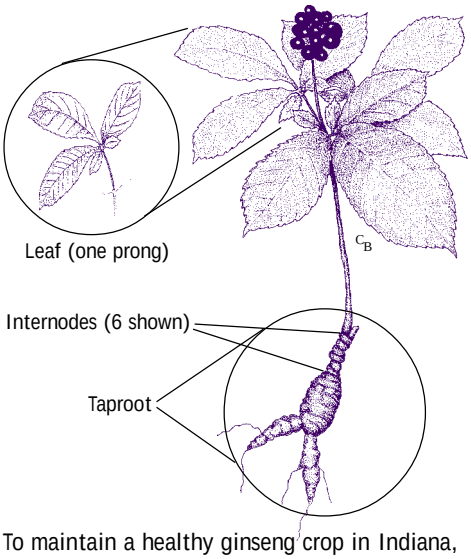
First year ginseng plants are about 2 inches tall and have one leaf (prong) with three leaflets.

Second and third year plants have two prongs with five leaflets each.

Plants four years and older are 12 to 14 inches tall and have three prongs with five leaflets. The two leaflets at the prong base are smaller than the other three.

Plants older than four years may have three to five prongs, each with five leaflets.

A large taproot, often with smaller tails forking off the main root, develops over several years. It is this taproot that has economic value.




To maintain a healthy ginseng crop in Indiana, it's illegal to dig the taproot until a plant has 3 or 4 prongs. Harvesting younger plants prevents them from forming the seeds they need for reproduction.

Contact a ginseng dealer for further advice on digging and drying ginseng. The easiest way to find a ginseng dealer is to check with the fur buyers in your area.

### Harvesting requirements

The plant must have three or more prongs and a flowering or fruiting stalk and four internodes on the taproot (rhizome). Fruits and seeds cannot be sold or removed from the harvested area. The seeds must be planted at the harvesting site in a manner that encourages germination.

### Harvest season

From Sept. 1 to Dec. 31 of each year, harvesters can legally dig wild ginseng. Harvesters do not need a license to dig ginseng nor sell ginseng to a licensed dealer.

### Harvesting on state property

Harvesting is not allowed on any state property.

### Harvesting on private property

Harvesting is not allowed on private property without the owner's permission.

### Possession of ginseng

A harvester cannot be in possession of ginseng after Dec. 31 unless it is certified. A dealer cannot be in possession of ginseng after March 31 unless it is certified. Ginseng certification must be done by an Indiana conservation officer.

An annual summary report is due to the Division of Nature Preserves no later than April 30 (which is 30 days after the last day of the selling season, March 31).

### Selling season

From Sept. 1 of current year through March 31 of the next year, dealers can legally purchase ginseng from harvesters.

When reselling ginseng purchased directly from harvesters, the dealer must fill out a form certifying the ginseng's origin and weight.

Ginseng that is bought for resale must be certified by a conservation officer. A copy of the certification must accompany the ginseng when it is shipped. By monitoring reports from dealers, the Division of Nature Preserves may better determine the status of ginseng.

### Dealer license year

Sept. 1 of current year through Aug. 31 of next year.

### Important new information

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service limits the export of wild ginseng to taproots that are five years of age or older. Federal inspectors will not allow the export of ginseng with fewer than five internodes.

Indiana's ginseng law requires ginseng taproots to have four or more internodes.

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**Michael Ellis**, program director, Division of Fish and Wildlife

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402 W. Washington St.
Room W267
Indianapolis IN 46204
317-232-4052 or fax 317-233-0133

For questions concerning laws and enforcement contact:
Law Enforcement Division
402 W. Washington St.
Room W255D
Indianapolis IN 46204
317-232-4010 or fax 317-232-8035

focus on

# *The Southwest Indiana Four Rivers project*

## *Acquiring, restoring, enhancing and protecting Hoosier habitat*

In southwest Indiana, where four rivers join — a group of conservation partners have joined together to purchase and develop waterfowl habitat. The focus area includes the watersheds of the Ohio, Wabash, White and Patoka Rivers.

### International agreement

The Four Rivers Project is part of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), an international wildlife management agreement among the United States, Canada and Mexico. It's one of the most ambitious continental wildlife conservation programs attempted. The plan provides:

- A strong biological foundation to restore waterfowl numbers
- A landscape approach to conservation by acquiring and developing proper habitat
- A public-private partnership that encompasses other migratory bird interests and initiatives.

The NAWMP strives to maintain the current diversity of duck species throughout North America and provide a breeding population of 62 million ducks during years of average environmental conditions. Reaching this goal will support a fall flight of 100 million ducks. The plan also establishes population goals for 30 populations of six species of geese.

### Habitat is the key

Proper habitat is important to migrating waterfowl, and neotropical, wading and shore birds as well as other wildlife.

Acquiring, restoring, enhancing, and protecting significant tracts of bottomland hardwoods in southwest Indiana provides a critical stepping stone along North America's migration routes.

### A partnership

Thirteen major partners make up the partnership that includes individuals, corporations, conservation organizations, and federal and state natural resource agencies.

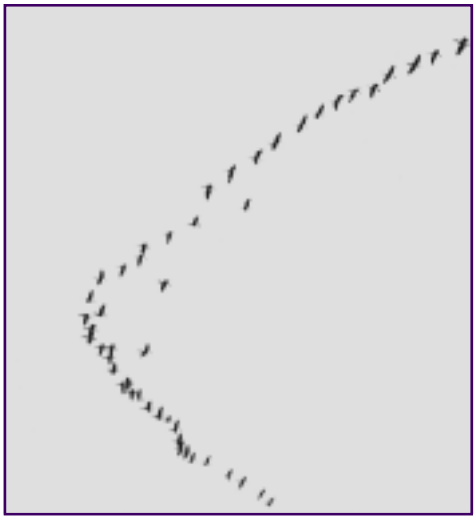
### Funding

Funding comes from an $800,000 North American Waterfowl Conservation Act agreement with the DNR and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The balance of $2,210,413 comes from partners.

Most of the land is managed by the Patoka National Wildlife Refuge and Hovey Lake Fish and Wildlife Area.

**Ed Theroff,** wildlife research supervisor, Division of Fish and Wildlife

The Southwest Indiana Four Rivers Project is one of three North American Waterfowl Management Plan projects in Indiana. Two of the projects are in northern Indiana.



The North American Waterfowl Management Plan will help restore waterfowl populations to 1970s levels—considered a benchmark decade for waterfowl.

### The Project proposal

- Acquire 1,115 acres of wetlands and associated uplands
- Restore 1,132 acres of wetlands
- Enhance 644 acres of wetlands
- Create 120 acres of wetlands.

### What was accomplished

- 1,165 acres involving 16 tracts of land were acquired
- 1,139 acres were restored to bottomland hardwood
- Warm and cool season grasses were planted to benefit waterfowl nesting
- Creation of seasonally flooded areas
- 655 acres were enhanced by planting bottomland hardwoods, placement of wood duck nest boxes, and acorn plantings
- 130 acres of wetlands were created by constructing levees, installing water control structures and installing a well.

focus on

# The timber rattlesnake

## *Even the species name Crotalus horridus, strikes fear in the hearts of*

Rattlesnake research is not for the faint-of-heart. Wildlife biologist Zachary Walker gets a lot of interesting reactions from folks who ask him what he does for a living.

Of all our fears and phobias, snakes surely must rate near the top of the list. Snakes, especially venomous ones like the timber rattlesnake, can send a double chill up the spine. Even their species name "horridus," connotes an almost unspeakable horror.

But what's the real story about rattlesnakes? Read on — you are in for some surprising answers.

In the springtime, many reptiles and amphibians begin to emerge from hibernation. Spring peepers and chorus frogs fill the air with their song, salamanders begin to creep toward small breeding ponds, and snakes slowly emerge from their dens. As the sun warms the earth, the timber rattlesnake begins to stir.

Indiana is home to about 35 snake species. The timber rattlesnake is one of Indiana's four venomous snakes, and is considered state endangered.

The Timber rattlesnake is typically brownish to yellow in color with a rust colored band along the length of its back. Additionally, there are 18 to 25 cross bands, or "chevrons," which run along the length of the snake. These colors provide a camouflage ideal for laying on the forest floor, allowing the rattlesnake to remain hidden from both predator and prey. Timber rattlesnakes will lie motionless when approached in hopes that they will not be seen. Even when encountered, this timid creature will attempt to flee if it feels threatened.

After the rattlesnake emerges from its den, it remains in the immediate area basking for a few days before moving off to its summer range — which can extend up to two miles. Once inside its summer range, the rattlesnake begins to search for food and shelter. Areas near fallen logs and thick ground vegetation, provide cover and a source of food.

The rattlesnake eats small rodents, ranging from mice to squirrels, small birds, and other warm blooded animals.

A timber rattlesnake will forage beside a fallen log or tree were it has smelled its prey. It will wait, with its head resting on a log, for the perfect moment to strike. As the prey runs along the log, it strikes. After biting its prey, the rattlesnake will wait for the venom to do its work. After the prey has died, the snake tracks it down by its scent and then swallows the prey head first.

If a snake doesn't have luck at one spot, it moves on in about a week to a new spot.

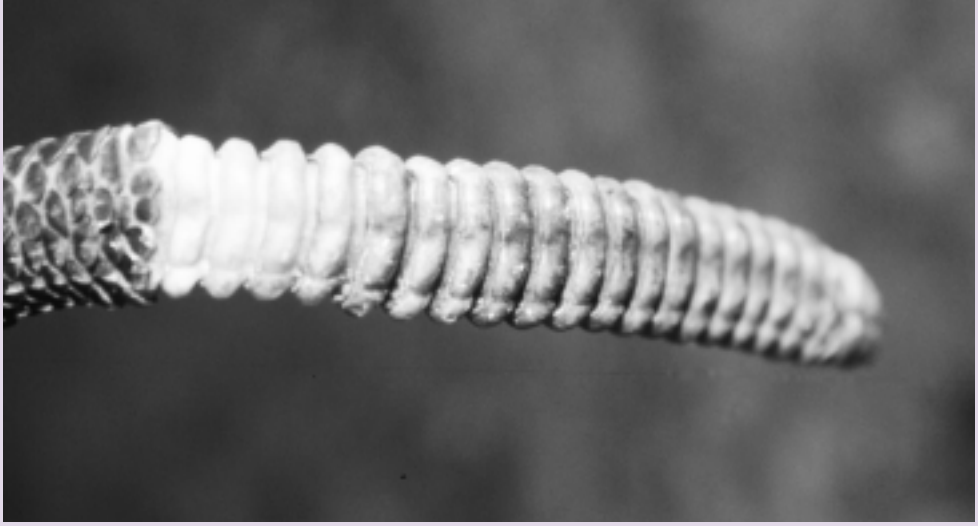
Rattlesnakes breed in August. Males travel extensive distances looking for females. It has been documented that an adult male can move nearly two miles in a few days while searching for females. Once a

Rattlesnakes are cold blooded. After eating they will move to warm areas for di and basking. Key characteristics for identifying a timber rattlesnake include: pi

## *f many people*

female is found, he will stay near her for a few days keeping other males away until they mate. After mating, the female will not give birth until the following year. In the spring, she will fertilize her eggs and move to a small open area where she will stay for the remainder of the summer, incubating the eggs within her. In the early fall, she will give live birth to 10 to 12 "neonates" (young). She will remain with them for about a week. After leaving her young, she will move toward her den searching for food as she travels.

During pregnancy, the female does not eat and loses considerable weight.



It's not possible to age a rattlesnake by the number of buttons in its rattle. Rattlesnakes add one button every time that they shed their skin. Younger snakes grow more quickly and can add up to three buttons in a year, while older snakes may only shed once a year. In the wild, timber rattlesnakes have been known to live up to 25 years.

She has to regain her fat reserves before breeding again. She may not give birth again for up to five years.

The young snakes are born venom capable, and with one button on their rattle. The young are usually slate grey in color. They have black chevrons and a pinkish white belly. The second week after birth, the juvenile rattlesnakes — now about 7 to 9 inches long, will shed their skins and gain another button. After the second shedding, the young snakes need to find a den in which to hibernate. To do this, they track scent trails left by the adult snakes to nearby dens. These dens will be their home for the upcoming years.

Young timber rattlesnakes are thought to have only about a 50 percent chance of making it through a year during their first three years.

After breeding season in late summer and the birth of neonates in early fall, rattlesnakes will try to get another meal before starting to move to their dens. Once they arrive at the den site, they usually share the den not only with other rattlesnakes, but many other types of snakes. It's possible to find garter snakes, black rat snakes, copperheads, and black racers denning together.

As winter approaches, shadows grow longer, skies turn a bleak grey, temperatures begin to drop, and the snakes move underground. There they wait patiently, in darkness and silence, for the return of spring. Spring warmth renews life to the earth and to the timber rattlesnake.

gestion
t organs,

elliptical pupils, keeled scales, fangs (modified teeth for delivering venom—a modified form of saliva), an undivided anal plate, and tail rattle.

**Zachary Walker,** wildlife biologist, Division of Fish and Wildlife

focus on

# Garold Spoonmore - ah, the memories

## 47 years with the DNR, on the same property


Garold Spoonmore, Avoca State Fish Hatchery manager, worked for the DNR's Division of Fish and Wildlife for 47 years.

Garold Spoonmore retired Sept. 1, after working 47 years in the DNR — at the same fish and wildlife property. That sounds like a lot of time, but to him, it's more like the blink of an eye.

For someone with Garold's number of years in the DNR, you would think he would like to talk about his many accomplishments, but not Garold. He's always generously shared the credit with others. If you don't know it by now, Garold is a modest man.

When asked what he liked most about the job, Garold replied that "he likes the people and the job."

Garold was 19 years old in 1953 when he began his DNR career as a laborer at the Avoca Fish Hatchery. It wasn't too long before he was named foreman, and then Avoca's property manager in 1982. A position he held until his retirement.

The job as hatchery manager has changed based on the needs of the hatchery programs, which supply fish to DNR properties all over the state.

He helped stock all nine of the state reservoirs as they were built for flood control by the Army Corps of Engineers.

For several years, Garold drove almost one hundred thousand miles a year to the several southern Indiana hatcheries to repair equipment and bring fish.

Many things can go wrong at a hatchery, from power outages, to broken aerators and pumps, to vehicle breakdowns, vandalism and fish rustling.

Speaking of fish rustling, Garold admits that as a young boy he tried to sneak into the hatchery and angle for a prize fish. So, he doesn't get too angry with local kids who try to do the same. He doesn't allow it, but he smiles with an understanding heart.

Garold Spoonmore grew up in Avoca and plans to spend now and forever there. Before he came to the DNR, Garold worked on several local family farms. After doing his chores at home, he did some of the work nobody likes to do, such as putting up hay and working in grain bins.

What's in the future for Garold? He's purchased a piece of property up on the hill from the fish hatchery — just above the cave spring that supplies the hatchery its water. He's building a new home for his wife of 42 years, Arretta. Their three grown daughters have blessed him with five granddaughters and one grandson.

Garold also likes to restore old cars. He's got a 1938 Ford sedan, a 1955 Ford convertible, a 1956 Buick and two 1951 Chevys. Garold said he might even find time to do some fishing.

**Steve Polston** is editor of *Outdoor Indiana* magazine

focus on

# *DNR's fish of the year program*

## *You've earned the right to brag*

### Go ahead and brag...

Last year, thirty-nine anglers participated in Indiana's "Fish of the Year" program, and 22 of them received special recognition.

### Could my fish have won?

If you didn't enter, you'll never know. There were no entries for a number of commonly caught Indiana sportfish. If you had filled out the form in the *2001 Indiana Fishing Guide* and sent it in for any of the following species, your fish would have been recognized as a "Fish of the Year." You would have gotten a smart-looking patch and certificate from the DNR.

**No entries were received for:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Atlantic salmon | bowfin |
| brook trout | brown trout |
| buffalo | bullhead |
| burbot | flier |
| green sunfish | hybrid walleye |
| lake trout | paddlefish |
| pink salmon | rainbow trout |
| redear sunfish | sauger |
| sucker | tiger muskie |
| tiger trout | warmouth |
| white bass | yellow perch |

### My catch wasn't that big

Many anglers don't realize their fish could be eligible for Fish-of-the-Year honors even if it isn't larger than the state record. The DNR's Fish of the Year program recognizes anglers who catch the largest fish each year in 47 different categories.

### Catch and release anglers

Catch and release anglers can participate, too. A fish's weight is not required for Fish of the Year. Only the length of the fish, a photo that can be used to identify the fish species, and two witnesses are needed. Fish with your rod and reel and complete the catch with your camera. Weight measurement on a certified scale is still required for state record consideration.

### Can children participate?

Yes they can. Four children won fish-of-the-year awards last year.

Billy Bonebrake, a 10-year-old from Russellville, Ind. out-muscled and out-hustled a 58-pound, 4-ounce flathead catfish from his "secret spot" on Cecil M. Harden Lake. The 52-inch fish was the longest and heaviest sportfish officially reported to the DNR in 2000.

Billy likes to fish for flathead catfish because he feels that "they're good-lookin' fish."

Billy and his dad showed off the fish to neighbors by trucking it around in an aerated horse trough before releasing the healthy catfish back into the lake.

The youngest winner was seven-year-old Nicole Cummings of Schererville, Ind. She was surprised when she landed a 9.25-inch rock bass onto a Lake Michigan dock last June. Nicole tricked the rock bass with her tried-and-true "Snoopy pole" and night crawler combo.

Children and youth sponsors may become more familiar with fishing techniques by participating in the Go FishIN program. To learn more about the program, check out the website at:
*www.state.in.us/dnr/fishwild/about/edcenter/gofishin.htm*

### What does it cost to enter?

There's no cost to submit your catch as a state record fish or as a fish of the year. Procedures for submitting an entry are in the DNR's *2001 Indiana Fishing Guide* and on the web at:
*fishing.IN.gov*

While fishing in a "secret spot" with his dad, Billy Bonebrake enticed this behemoth flathead catfish to take an 8-inch live sucker bait dangled from a spinning rod. Billy always goes fishing with his dad right before his birthday. He and his dad have caught some big flatheads in that same spot.

### How is my information used?

Your information will be added to state record fish data and lore collected since the early '60s — records that show the largemouth bass state record has been broken several times since the first 10-pound, 5-ounce record was set in 1963.

The records also show March, April, May and June appear to be the best months to catch large bluegill. Most state records were taken early in the fishing season. Big catfish are usually taken in July and August. Entries show that every region in Indiana is capable of producing a big fish.

### Is there a deadline?

Fish of the Year entries must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 2001, for any fish caught during this calendar year.

**John Maxwell,** program director, Division of Fish and Wildlife

focus on

# *Let the flier beware*

## *Angling for a new state fish record—the expedition begins*

At the end of the road farthest from Everywhere Else, Ind., lives an almost mythical forgotten fish. Down low in the Patoka territories, where fishing hole names all include the words "swamp", "snake" or "snakey," old men and grizzled fisheries biologists sit around winter stoves mumbling about a rare fish occasionally caught or seen during their sunny days of youth. A fish rarely seen before or since. A fish called the flier.

In the summer of 2001, a small intrepid band of anglers struck out into these misty vine-entangled swamps to reconnoiter and fish for a new state flier size record. A record that has stood for almost 20 years.

The flier is a pint-sized cross between a sunfish and a yeti, or a crappie and a sasquatch. The species' range includes the lowlands of the southeastern and midwestern United States, but it is rarely abundant. The flier is more tolerant of acidity than other sunfish, and prefers clear weedy waters. The streamlined panfish is named for its enthusiastic habit of jumping over the water's surface in pursuit of insects.

### It's not the biggest, but it's the smallest

The largest flier caught in Indiana weighed a whopping 3.5 ounces, and was caught in 1983 from a tributary to the Muscatatuck River—another snakey, gristly Indiana low spot.

"I thought it might go seven inches," says Harold Otte. Otte's keen length estimate was good, as the tape measure stretched seven inches from the tip of the fish's snapping jaws on out to the broad fan-shaped tail.

Otte lived in Seymour during those days of glory, but now lives near Greenwood. The fishing champion says he has had a lot of fun over the years joking with his friends about his record fish, and he even got the fish preserved and mounted without charge at a taxidermy shop that had a standing offer to mount any state record fish for free. The fish is now handsomely displayed against a hand-sized piece of driftwood.

Otte says he caught the state-record fish while tight-lining a nightcrawler for bluegill and crappie. He says his son had battled, and lost a bigger flier on the same day. He believes the fish, induced by a heavy spring water flow, swam up from the Muscatatuck River.

### The first state record flier expedition begins

The first "State Record Flier Expedition" (SRFE) headed to the water-logged Patoka River mire in May 2001. The mission: catch a big flier. Fish scientist Dan Carnahan from Winslow, Ind. photographer John Maxwell from Indianapolis, tactician Jon Marshall from Lizton, Ind. and a guy named Tom made up the first Indiana SRFE. Young Tom showed up with Carnahan, and could lift a flatbottom boat, so he was in.

At 14:00 hours the expedition launched onto a small Patoka River oxbow lake near Sugar Ridge Fish and Wildlife Area. Carnahan said he had seen several fliers while surveying the lake's fish population. Rubber spider flies, spinners, and crickets or small nightcrawlers were deployed around several flatbottom boats.

Bluegill, drum, redear sunfish, bowfin, gar, white bass, crappie and a certain state-record red spotted sunfish were caught, but no fliers.

The mightiest Hoosier flier was lifted from Mill Creek by Harold Otte of Greenwood, Ind. In 1983, Otte used a spinning reel to winch the historical fish from Mill Creek below Starve Hollow Dam.

Dan Carnahan catches the wrong big little fish. Carnahan returned the certain state-record 2-inch-long spotted sunfish back into the water because the state does not track the species.

Carnahan returned the certain state-record 2-inch-long spotted sunfish back into the lake because the state does not track the species. Weather: heavy rain. Expedition pulls out of lake at 18:00 hours.

The next day at 06:00 hours the expedition launched one boat into the Snakey Point Swamp near Oakland City. The swamp is part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge. Carnahan said old locals reported seeing fliers in the swamp's murky, gassy mist.

Baits, lures and flies were again deployed. Dozens of redear sunfish were caught, but no fliers. No other anglers were seen through the driving rain, but a dingo type dog was spotted.

Weather: light to heavy rain. At 13:00 hours the first state record flier expedition members bail out boat and return to civilization. A second flier expedition is possible.

## Indiana's record fish listings

For almost 40 years, Indiana's record fish program has recorded the largest fish of 47 different species caught on hook and line in Indiana. Notable fish that are smaller than the state record fish are eligible for the fish-of-the-year honors (see page 9 for details).

**John Maxwell,** photographer (member of the flier expedition), Division of Fish and Wildlife

**Jon (left) and young Tom ready the state record flier expedition boat at Snakey Point Swamp.**

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